

What is claimed is:

1. A method for collecting multimedia program information from a plurality of multimedia transport streams, comprising:
 - receiving a plurality of transport streams, each of which contains program information regarding multimedia programs carried in the transport stream;
 - receiving requests for collecting program information, said requests identifying program information to be collected from one or more of the transport streams;
 - obtaining program information from the plurality of transport streams as they are received; and
 - processing the obtained program information in accordance with the requested program information to locate a match between the requested and received program information.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of the transport streams is an MPEG transport stream.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the requested program information is comprised of multiple fields.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein said fields include at least one Program Identification (PID) Code.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said processing of the program information is done asynchronously with respect to said receiving step.
6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of notifying an application requesting the program information once a match is located.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the application requesting the program information periodically queries the status of the request.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the program information carried in the transport streams is received out of the sequence specified in the request.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said processing includes dividing the requested information into multiple lists and searching each list as program information is received from the transport streams.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein a linear search algorithm is used to conduct the search.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein a binary search algorithm is used to conduct the search.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein a binary tree search algorithm is used to conduct the search.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein plurality of requests is received simultaneously from different applications.

14. Apparatus for collecting multimedia program information from a plurality of multimedia transport streams, comprising:

an input module for receiving a plurality of transport streams, each of which contains at least one of video, audio, and program information regarding multimedia programs carried in the transport stream;

an input processor for separating program information from the plurality of transport streams as they are received; and

a central processing unit for:

- (i) receiving requests for specific program information separated by said input processor,
- (ii) locating a match between the requested and separated program information, and
- (iii) processing the matched program information.

15. Apparatus in accordance with claim 14 wherein at least one of the transport streams is an MPEG transport stream.

16. Apparatus in accordance with claim 14 wherein the requested program information is comprised of multiple fields.

17. Apparatus in accordance with claim 16 wherein said fields include at least one Program Identification (PID) Code.

18. Apparatus in accordance with claim 14 wherein said processing of the program information is done asynchronously with respect to receiving requests for collecting program information.

19. Apparatus in accordance with claim 14 further capable of notifying an application requesting the program information once a match is located.

20. Apparatus in accordance with claim 19 wherein the application requesting the program information periodically queries the status of the request.

21. Apparatus in accordance with claim 14 wherein the program information carried in the transport streams is received out of the sequence specified in the request.

22. Apparatus in accordance with claim 14 wherein said processing includes dividing the requested information into multiple lists and searching each list as program information is received from the transport streams.

23. Apparatus in accordance with claim 22 wherein a linear search algorithm is used to conduct the search.

24. Apparatus in accordance with claim 22 wherein a binary search algorithm is used to conduct the search.

25. Apparatus in accordance with claim 22 wherein a binary tree search algorithm is used to conduct the search.

26. Apparatus in accordance with claim 14 wherein a plurality of requests is received simultaneously from different applications.